

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 059308

64

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TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

PLEASE PASS TO RODMAN/ADAMS/BORG FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHPOST EDITORIAL MONDAY, MARCH 17,
TITLED "CAMBODIAN AID: ADMINISTRATION'S CHOICE."

2. THE IMPRESSION IS CURRENT AND WIDESPREAD THAT THE
CONGRESS WON'T GIVE THE ADMINISTRATION ANY MORE MONEY FOR
MILITARY AID TO CAMBODIA. BUT THE IMPRESSION IS FAULTY.
UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, THE CONGRESS MIGHT COME THROUGH.
IT DEPENDS ON THE ADMINISTRATION.

3. CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENED THURSDAY. THE HOUSE FOREIGN
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, UNDER A COMPROMISE OFFERED BY REP.
LEE HAMILTON (D-IND.), SEEMED ALL SET TO OFFER AN EXTRA
\$82.5 MILLION. BUT THE STATE DEPARTMENT REJECTED THE
MONEY ON GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO COMMIT ITSELF TO
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 059308

WORKING FOR A SETTLEMENT BY JUNE 30 AND GIVING NO

ADDITIONAL AID AFTER THAT DATE. SO THE COMMITTEE VOTED DOWN THE COMPROMISE 18 TO 15. THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION WAS ABSOLUTELY SELF-DEFEATING, A TRIUMPH OF INSTITUTIONAL MYOPIA OVER NATIONAL INTEREST. THE COMMITTEE WAS OFFERING AID, WITH STRINGS ATTACHED: THE STRINGS WOULD HAVE PROVIDED SOME PROSPECTS, HOWEVER FAINT, OF BRINGING THE

WAR AND ITS AGONY TO AN END IN AN ORDERLY AND HUMANE WAY. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAS BEEN UTTERLY UNABLE ITSELF TO END THE WAR OR EASE THE AGONY, REJECTED THE PACKAGE.

4. IF THE ADMINISTRATION MERELY WANTS TO PUT THE ONUS FOR FAILURE ON CONGRESS, IT WILL SIT TIGHT. IF IT IS SERIOUS ABOUT THE AID, HOWEVER--AND THERE ARE NOW SIGNS THAT PRESIDENT FORD HIMSELF DOES SEE THE LIGHT--IT WILL PROMPTLY RETURN TO THE HILL AND, IN THE VOTES REMAINING ON THE ISSUE IN THE SENATE AND HOUSE, ASK FOR THE HAMILTON COMPROMISE. THIS WILL REQUIRE A CONSIDERABLE SWALLOWING OF PRIDE. BUT IT COULD WORK. DEMOCRATIC CAUCUSES IN BOTH HOUSES HAVE VOTED--ON THE BLUNT AND EMOTIONAL ISSUE OF AID, YES OR NO--AGAINST FURTHER CAMBODIAN AID. BUT ON THE MORE PRECISE AND RESPONSIBLE ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN FRAMED IN THE COMMITTEES--AID WITH CONDITIONS AIMED AT PEACE AS AGAINST NO AID--THE EVIDENCE OF SEVERAL VOTES IS THAT THE CONGRESS DOES NOT WANT TO ABANDON CAMBODIA; IT WANTS TO SEE IT THROUGH TO A PEACEFUL SHORE. WHETHER A NON-COMMUNIST OR COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT CONTROLS THAT SHORE IS NOT SO IMPORTANT TO THE CONGRESS IN THIS INSTANCE AS IS THE ENDING OF THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE AND PAIN. THE ADMINISTRATION, SEEMINGLY BLINDED BY ITS OWN EXAGGERATED FEARS THAT AMERICAN GLOBAL CREDITABILITY WILL BE SHAKEN, HAS YET TO SHOW THAT IT UNDERSTANDS THE FEELING ON CAPITOL HILL. BUT THE FEELING IS THERE TO BE TAPPED. AS WE SAY, IT DEPENDS ON THE ADMINISTRATION.

5. DESPERATELY GRASPING FOR AN EMOTIONAL LEVER WITH WHICH TO MOVE THE CONGRESS, THE ADMINISTRATION CLAIMS THAT, IF AID IS WITHHELD AND THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 059308

TAKE OVER, A "BLOOD BATH" WILL ENSUE. WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION DROPS THIS PARTICULAR ARGUMENT, CONGRESS WILL KNOW THE ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS ABOUT THE AID. FOR THE HEART OF THE CONGRESSIONAL POSITION IS COMPASSION FOR THE SUFFERING PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA. IF THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS, IT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND ANYTHING. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT ONE CAN DISMISS THE "BLOOD BATH" SPECTER OUT OF HAND: THOSE ROCKETS RAINING

DOWN ON CIVILIANS IN PHNOM PENH ARE VERY REAL. BUT THE CONGRESS PLAINLY FEELS THAT THE THREATENED "BLOOD BATH" IS LESS OMINOUS THAN A CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT BLOODLETTING. THE ADMINISTRATION'S CHOICE IS TO ARGUE THE POINT AND SURELY LOSE THE AID, OR TO CONCEDE THE POINT AND POSSIBLY GET THE AID. IT'S THAT SIMPLE.

6. THE ADMINISTRATION STILL PROFESSES TO BELIEVE THAT AMERICAN WILL IS BEING TESTED IN CAMBODIA. BUT CONGRESS FEELS, QUITE RIGHTLY, THAT WHAT IS ACTUALLY BEING TESTED IS AMERICAN SENSE. THE MORE THE ADMINISTRATION INSISTS THAT AMERICAN CONSTANCY RATHER THAN AMERICAN JUDGMENT IS AT ISSUE, THE WORSE THE EVENTUAL AMERICAN LOSS IN CAMBODIA WILL APPEAR TO BE. AND THE MORE CERTAIN WILL BE THE ADMINISTRATION'S FAILURE TO GET THAT MODICUM OF EXTRA AID NEEDED TO PROVIDE A CHANCE--AND A CHANCE IS ALL THERE NOW IS--TO BRING THE WAR IN CAMBODIA COMPASSIONATELY AND QUICKLY TO AN END. (END TEXT.) ROBINSON

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